

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 IO-13
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O 111539Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4859
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DAKAR 5266

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MR, SG
SUBJECT: REACTION IN SENEGAL TO COUP D'ETAT IN MAURITANIA

REF: STATE 173958

1. REACTION IN SENEGAL TO COUP D'ETAT IN MAURITANIA IS
ONE OF GREAT CONCERN AND INTENSE INTEREST, BUT ESSENTIALLY
"WAIT AND SEE."

2. WE HAVE REPORTS THAT GOS AND PRESIDENT SENGHOR WERE
AT FIRST IN HIGH STATE OF AGITATION WHEN THEY HEARD NEWS
EARLY YESTERDAY MORNING OF OULD DADDAH'S OVERTHROW IN
NOUAKCHOTT. GOS UNDERTOOK QUICKLY TO INFORM MME. MARIAM
OULD DADDAH WHO WAS ATTENDING OPENING MEETING OF INTER-
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN JURISTS AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
BUILDING IN DAKAR. MME. OULD DADDAH REPORTEDLY LEFT
DAKAR FOR NOUAKCHOTT OVERLAND YESTERDAY AFTERNOON.

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3. MAIN CONCERN OF SENEGALESE WAS AND IS POLITICAL
ORIENTATION OF NEW MILITARY LEADERS. AT FIRST WE HEARD
REITERATION FROM SOME GOS OFFICIALS OF PRESIDENT
SENGHOR'S PREVIOUS WARNINGS THAT SENEGAL COULD NOT BE
INDIFFERENT TO ANY RADICAL INTERNAL CHANGE INSIDE
MAURITANIA BECAUSE OF SENEGAL'S HISTORY AND ETHNIC TIES,

PARTICULARLY WITH THE BLACK (NON-MOORISH) POPULATION OF MAURITANIA. (SENGHOR HAD SAID THAT SENEGAL, WHEN MAURITANIA BECAME INDEPENDENT IN 1960, HAD RELINQUISHED ITS CLAIMS OVER BLACK-INHABITED TERRITORIES NORTH OF THE SENEGAL RIVER. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT IF A RADICAL, PRO-POLISARIO GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER IN MAURITANIA, SENEGAL WOULD RESERVE RIGHT TO RE-OPEN ITS TERRITORIAL CLAIMS. IN ADDITION, THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS OF SENECALESE TROOPS MOVEMENTS TO THE NORTHERN BORDERS. (WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION OF THIS.)

4. SENGHOR WAS REPORTEDLY PARTICULARLY UPSET WITH NEWS OF MILITARY COUP IN NOUAKCHOTT AND IS SAID TO HAVE PLACED SENECALESE ARMY ON ALERT AND TO HAVE CONTEMPLATED RECALL OF SENECALESE BATTALLIONS FROM UNIFIL FORCES IN LEBANON AND INTER-AFRICAN FORCE IN ZAIRE. HOWEVER, FRENCH AMBASSADOR APPARENTLY CALLED ON SENGHOR BEFORE NOON AND PROVIDED CERTAIN INFORMATION CONCERNING COUP AND COUP LEADERS' ORIENTATION IN MAURITANIA WHICH SENGHOR FOUND REASSURING.

5. AT DAY'S END, BY WHICH TIME MORE DETAILED NEWS OF COUP HAD FILTERED THROUGH, INCLUDING COMMITTEE'S PLEDGE TO HONOR ALL MAURITANIA'S FOREIGN AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS, AND TO CONSOLIDATE AND IMPROVE TIES, WITH FRATERNAL AND FRIENDLY COUNTRIES, SENECALESE APPEARED TO

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HAVE SIMMERED DOWN AND WERE ADOPTING "WAIT AND SEE" ATTITUDE. THIS WAS THE PHRASE USED IN CONVERSATION WHICH DATT HAD WITH SENECALESE ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL IDRISSE FALL LAST EVENING AND IS ALSO TENOR OF COMMENTS MADE BY OTHER GOS OFFICIALS TO CHARGE AND OTHER EMBASSY OFFICERS. OVERTHROW OF OULD DADDAAH IS LEAD HEADLINE IN TODAY'S LE SOLEIL. STORIES ARE STRIGHTFORWARD AND MAINLY BASED ON AFP AND REUTERS DISPATCHES. FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL DESCRIBE IN SOME DETAIL EXTREME ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES IN WHICH MAURITANIA FOUND ITSELF, THE REACTIONS IN NOUAKCHOTT TO RECENT ANTI-CORRUPTION LAWS AND TO ADOPTION OF KORANIC LAW FOR PUNISHING THOSE GUILTY OF CORRUPTION, AND CONCLUDES AS TO FUTURE ORIENTATION OF NEW REGIME THAT MAURITANIA'S NEW MILITARY LEADERSHIP CANNOT AFFORD LUXURY OF LOSING A WAR WHICH IT BLAMES THE CIVILIANS FOR NOT HAVING WON. LE SOLEIL EDITORIAL ALSO PUTS A SPECIAL SENECALESE SLANT ON EVENTS IN NOUAKCHOTT, REFERRING TO RECENT SACKING OF BLACKS FROM POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE UNDER OULD DADDAAH AND GENERAL UNHAPPINESS AND RESENTMENT OF BLACK MINORITY IN MAURITANIA.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DAKAR 5266

6. TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR, ONE OF MOST ASTUTE OBSERVERS
IN DAKAR, HAD TOLD US THAT WHEN HE PAID FAREWELL CALL
ON MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH LAST WEEK, HE WAS
STRUCK BY OULD DADDAH'S DISENCHANTMENT WITH SENGHOR.
OULD DADDAH REPORTEDLY TOLD TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR THAT HE
DISAGREED WITH SENGHOR WHO MAINTAINED THAT
POLISARIO IS PROFOUNDLY RACIST IN ITS ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS.
UPON REFLECTION, TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR HAD CONCLUDED THAT
OULD DADDAH FELT THAT HE HAD COME TO THE END OF THE LINE
MILITARILY WITH POLISARIO, AND WAS ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR
COMPROMISE AND NEGOTIATIONS, BOTH WITH THE POLISARIO AND
THE ALGERIANS. TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR THOUGHT THAT IF OULD
DADDAH HAD BEEN TAKING THIS LINE WITH MAURITANIAN MILITARY, THIS
MAY HAVE CONSTITUTED AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THEIR DECISION
TO OVERTHROW OULD DADDAH AT THIS POINT.
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